

Vonnegut Library asked to be part of National Summit on arts in the military

Invitation-only event marks Indianapolis venue's rising prominence

INDIANAPOLIS – Julia Whitehead, executive director of the Kurt Vonnegut Memorial Library, has been invited to participate in a national summit on arts and health in the military.

The **2nd National Summit: Arts, Health and Well-being Across the Military Continuum** is an invitation-only gathering focused on the benefits of arts exposure, active art-making and issues related to research, policy and practice in arts and health across the military continuum (from pre-deployment through reintegration into civilian life).

The Vonnegut Library was established in 2009 to champion the contributions of writer and artist Kurt Vonnegut Jr., a military veteran. Over the past year, it has forged partnerships with various military groups to present programs aimed at showing veterans how the arts and humanities can help them communicate and heal.

“Kurt Vonnegut was a World War II veteran – his experience is the basis of his novel *Slaughterhouse-Five* and shows up in many of his works. So it's natural that the Vonnegut Library should create programs for military personnel,” said Julia Whitehead, who was a Marine herself.

In November 2012, a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc. helped the library Veterans Reclaim Armistice Day: Healing through the Humanities for some 250 veterans and their families focused on arts-based ways of coping with post-traumatic stress disorder. The event brought together representatives from the U.S. Army Center of Military History, VA, HVAF, American Legion, VFW, Indiana War Memorial and the Military Family Research Institute, as well as the ArtReach Foundation, Herron School of Art and the Indiana Humanities Council and numerous artist-veterans.

This November, a citywide celebration dubbed VonnegutFest will include a military panel headed by NPR's Steve Inskeep (author of *Instant City: Life and Death in Karachi*) with Tim O'Brien, Vietnam vet and National Book Award winner (*The Things They Carried*). The panel will explore how military veterans can safely express themselves through writing.

“Kurt's books show his sense of humor as well as his love for humanity and his ability to pinpoint absurdities in our society. Veterans like Vonnegut have made significant contributions in the arts, and it's time to highlight the importance of the arts in all of our lives,” Whitehead said.

The 2nd National Summit will be held at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on April 10, 2013.

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